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SIR MICHAEL FOSTER (1836–1907)

Foreign Honorary Member in Class II, Section 3, 1896.

Sir Michael Foster was born at Huntingdon, England, March 8, 1836. In school he distinguished himself in classics, and in 1854 took his B. A. degree at London University on the Arts side. His bent was toward the classics, but being a Non-conformist he was debarred from the fellowships at Cambridge that he might otherwise have taken. Instead he followed his father's footsteps and studied medicine at University College, London, where he took the M. D. degree in 1859.

After a year of study in Paris he was sent away for his health, being threatened with pulmonary disease. This danger obliged him throughout his life to spend much time out of doors.

In 1861 he began the practice of medicine with his father. This he continued for six years. Then he accepted an invitation from his former teacher, Sharpey, to give a course of practical physiology at University College, thus beginning his career as a scientist and abandoning the practice of medicine.

At this stage in his career Foster was much influenced by Huxley whom he succeeded as Fullerian Professor of Physiology at the Royal Institution in 1869. And when in the next year Huxley commenced his course of elementary biology at South Kensington, Foster among others assisted him.

It was largely through his connection with Huxley that Foster became identified with the great change which occurred in the science of physiology during his life; a change in which he was perhaps the most active leader. Hitherto physiology had in general been treated descriptively as a mere adjunct of human anatomy; the statements were largely based on familiar observations and on inferences drawn from the study of structure. The great advances which have marked the new era have come through the introduction of the experimental method.

Perhaps the most important event in this movement was the establishment in 1870 by Trinity College in the University of Cambridge of separate teaching in physiology. Huxley was consulted by the originators of the project, and at once recommended Foster for this work. He was made Trinity Praelector of Physiology, working in the University, but having no official connection with it. He was allowed one small room in which to conduct his lectures and laboratory work in histology and experimental physiology. He was assisted by H. Newell Martin who came with him from London. From this beginning arose the whole Biological School of Cambridge which in 1914 had become one of the great centres of physiological research.

Foster's teaching was a revelation, and his enthusiasm led many of his pupils to devote their lives to physiology. Soon he had gathered round him a group of helpers among the first of whom were Gaskell, Langley, Lea and Dew Smith.

In 1883 when a professorship of physiology was founded at Cambridge, Foster was elected to the chair. He was a strong believer in making the students learn physiology through experiments which they themselves performed; and he insisted that a course of lectures must be closely coordinated with the laboratory program.

Besides being the leader in bringing physiological research and teaching to their own in England, he did great service in being the prime mover in the formation of the Physiological Society in 1876, and two years later in founding the Journal of Physiology. In 1881 he planned with Kronecker the organization of the International Congress of Physiologists which has been held every three years ever since.

In 1872 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and from 1881 to 1903 he served as one of its secretaries. He gave much of himself to the work of the Society. Through it he came in touch with the Government, and was appointed to serve on various Royal Commissions. In 1899 he was made a K. C. B.

In 1900 upon the urging of his friends he was a candidate for election to Parliament as representative of London University. He was elected and served with considerable influence until 1906. His duties in Parliament proved to conflict with his professional ones and he resigned his professorship in 1903. After his retirement from Parliament he continued actively at work at his duties on public Commissions till the day of his death, January 28, 1907.

He was married twice. His first wife whom he married in 1863, died six years later, leaving him with two children. His second marriage took place in 1872.

Foster's original researches were few in number but of the highest quality, both with respect to conception and execution. His great achievement was rather one of personal influence exercised in behalf of science in general and physiology in particular. His 'Text-book of Physiology' published in 1877 was recognized as superior to any other and has appeared in six successive editions.

His influence on physiology in America has been great, especially in that through his influence H. N. Martin became Professor of Physiology at Johns Hopkins University in 1876.

In closing it may be fitting to mention the great monument which marks his career in the unique group of physiologists which it was my privilege to see gathered together in the Cambridge laboratory in 1912. Here, with Gaskell retired but still keeping in touch with the work, and with Langley at the head, was a constellation of physiological stars probably unsurpassed by any other group. Many branches of physiology were being investigated by men of exceptional ability. But what commanded my admiration especially was the work of Lucas and his coworkers who in the years 1904 to 1914 threw more light on the fundamental functional properties and vital phenomena in the excitable tissues, nerve and muscle, than had been thrown by all previous workers. This work, whose influence on physiological thought has only begun to be felt, redounds of course chiefly to the credit of the workers themselves. But it is probable that none would be readier than the Cambridge physiologists of today to agree that Foster's influence in creating the school is a factor without which it would be impossible to picture the result as it has been realized in the present decade.

Alexander Forbes.

MELVILLE WESTON FULLER (1833–1910)

Fellow in Class III, Section 1, 1900.

Melville Weston Fuller, Eighth Chief Justice of the United States, was born at Augusta in Maine on the 11th day of February, 1833. He entered Bowdoin College at the age of sixteen, after his graduation studied law at the Harvard Law School, and began the practice of his profession in his native city. He shortly afterwards became city attorney, served as an alderman, and was the editor of *The Age* which was the rival of the *Kennebec Journal,* at that time controlled by James G. Blaine. Though he rose thus rapidly at home he was not satisfied with the opportunities which were offered to him in Maine, and at the age of twenty-three he emigrated to Chicago, where he commenced life anew. His practice in Chicago was large and varied, and he won